

SRIMADBHAGAVADGITA

**Summary on
Third Chapter**

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SUMMARY

- Note: 1. Portions in brackets are supplied ideas.
2. Numbers in brackets indicate the verses.

In the second chapter, the Lord praised Self-knowledge right from the beginning (11, 21, 46) and criticized the *karmakāṇḍa* of the *Vedas* (42 to 45). Thereafter, He asked *Arjuna* to take to *karma* (48). This creates a serious doubt in *Arjuna* and the third chapter begins with this doubt.

Arjuna asks—"Oh Lord! You seem to confuse me by contradictory statements. Tell me one—knowledge or *karma*—which will lead me to *Mokṣa*" (1- 2).

Bhagavān answers that there are two lifestyles called *karma-yoga-niṣṭhā* (social life) and *jñāna-yoga-niṣṭhā* (secluded life.) One can choose anyone of them as a householder or as a monk (3).

(But there is no choice between *karma* and knowledge. Whatever lifestyle one chooses, one has to follow relevant *karma* for purity and then pursue knowledge to discover the freedom that is one's true nature.

Of these two lifestyles, *Kṛṣṇa* gives preference to social life throughout the *Gītā*. In the *Upaniṣads* we find the latter emphasised. Choice depends on the maturity of the seeker.)

From the 4th to the 7th verse, *Kṛṣṇa* condemns inaction and praises an alert and active life. Inaction should be avoided because:

1. Neither purity nor knowledge can be achieved by that (4);
2. Desires force one to act and inaction will be a suppression (5);

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3. A mind without occupation will be idle. It will brood over sense-pleasures. Such a hypocritical mind will soon fall (6). (Also refer II - 62, 63)

From the 8th to the 20th the verse (1st line,) *Bhagavān* deals with one of the most beautiful and important topics of the *Gītā* viz. *karma-yoga*.

Having created the world and the intelligent human beings, the Lord Himself advocated (in the *Vedas*) the way of life which is *karma-yoga*. By following this, material and spiritual progress can be attained (10 to 14).

Since it is the teaching of the Lord, the Master of the universe (*Svāmī*), human being has to take it as a command (*niyatam*) and obey it as a servant (*bhṛtya*) of the Lord (8).

When we follow the teachings of the Lord, it becomes a gesture of our appreciation for all the gifts and blessings that the Lord has bestowed upon us. Thus, our work becomes a worship or loving offering (*yajña*) to God. It purifies the mind also (9, 13).

Lastly, *karma-yoga* is necessary to maintain the harmony of the universe upon which we are dependant. The working of the universe being a cyclic process, with the human beings as its important link, one must be aware of ones responsibility (duty.) Thus, *karma-yoga* is only the duty (*kāryam*) of a responsible citizen of the world. One who does not discharge it proves himself/herself to be an immature human being (14 to 16).

Thus, *karma-yoga* is to be pursued because:

1. It contributes to material and spiritual progress (*yoga*);
2. It is the commandment (*niyatam*) of the Master of the universe;

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3. It is our grateful offering (*yajña*) to the Lord, acknowledging His gifts.
4. It is the only way of maintaining the harmony (*dharma*.)

(In this chapter, *Bhagavān* does not talk about *kāmya-karma*— actions to fulfil the desires. This shows that true *karma-yoga* does not involve *kāmya-karma*. Hence a seeker must gradually reduce *kāmya-karma*, even to become a true *karma-yogī*.)

Karma-yoga ultimately leads one to liberation through the stages of purity (*śuddhi*), enquiry (*vicāra*) and knowledge (*jñānam*) (17, 18). *Kṛṣṇa* concludes the topic by citing the example of *Janaka* who successfully pursued knowledge while remaining in *karma-yoga-niṣṭhā* (social life) (20, 1st line).

From the 20th (2nd line) to the 29th verse, the Lord talks about the role of a wise man in the society, taking *Arjuna* as one. Any person with a higher status or knowledge (*śreṣṭha*), can influence others positively or negatively. Hence, even though *Arjuna* might not benefit from this war, he has to fight as *kṣatriya*'s duty and set an example to others. Else, he will be responsible for anarchy in his own time as well as in the future. (22 to 25).

Thus, both the wise and the ignorant should act— the former for teaching others, and the latter, for purity. The only difference is that the former will be detached while the latter won't be. (27 to 29).

The 30th verse summarises *karma-yoga*, giving five conditions;

1. Keep the spiritual goal. 2. Offer all actions to the Lord. 3. Don't be concerned about the result. 4. Be free from possessiveness and 5. Be calm.

One who follows *karma-yoga* reaches the goal of life and the other is lost (31, 32).

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Likes and dislikes (*rāga-dveṣa*) born of habits (*vāsanās*) pull a person astray. Still, a person should not go by what he likes to do but what he has to do (duty,) even if it involves difficulties (33 to 35).

As an answer to *Arjuna's* question (36), *Kṛṣṇa* elaborately discusses the problem of *kāma-krodha* (*rāga-dveṣa*). They are the real enemies of a seeker (37). Clouding the knowledge, they force a person to run after endless insatiable desires and take away all the chances of peace and progress (38, 39). The senses, the mind, and the intellect are the base of desires. They have to be taken care of (40, 41).

(*Durvāsanās* should be replaced by *śubhavāsanās* by practice. False values should be replaced by right ones through discrimination.)

Once *kāma* becomes weak, one can discover the *Ātmā*, which is beyond the senses, the mind, and the intellect and thus destroy *kāma* for good (42, 43).

Thus the third chapter discusses the following topics mainly:

1. Introduction.....1 to 7
2. *Karmayoga*..... 8 to 20 (1st line)
3. The role of a wise person 20 (2nd line) to 29
4. Summary..... 30 to 35
5. The problem of desire and its solution.....36 to 43

Since *karma-yoga* is the main topic, this chapter is called *Karma-yoga*.
